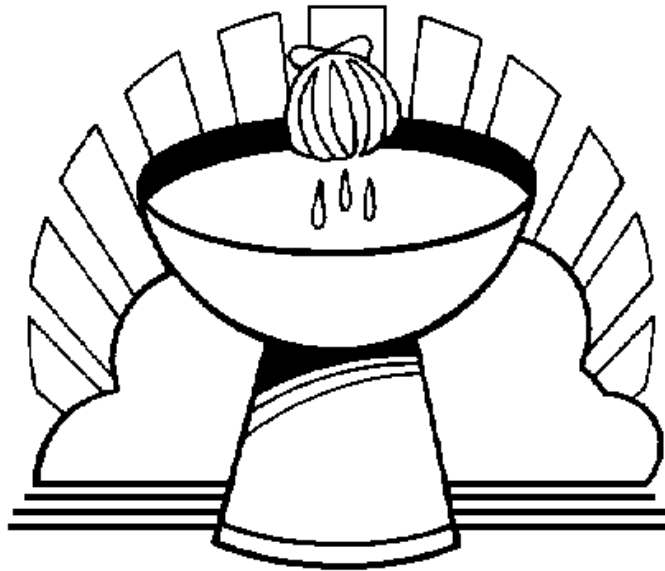


The Sacrament of
Baptism



First Congregational Church
of Stoughton
United Church of Christ

76 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02072



sacrament of
BAPTISM

This baptism booklet has been prepared to help you plan the baptism of your child at the First Congregational Church of Stoughton, United Church of Christ. We have included information regarding the theology and meaning of baptism in our denomination, the United Church of Christ, as well as our policies regarding baptism.

Through baptism, you are accepting the invitation to be in an enduring and deep relationship with our faith community, and we are promising to walk with you and your child on your faith journeys. All baptisms take place during our Sunday morning worship service. During the sacrament, you will be taking covenantal vows before God and the congregation that you will raise your child in the Christian faith *and* nurture your own growth in the Christian faith. The members of our congregation will also be taking covenantal vows to help you raise your child in the Christian faith. We expect that you will take seriously these vows that you make, participating in and raising your child in the midst of our faith community.

We set aside certain Sundays during the year for baptisms. (Generally, we do not do baptisms on Communion Sundays, which are the first Sunday of the month.)

If, after reading this booklet, you are interested in finding out more information, please call Rev. Jean Lenk at 781-344-2395.

Baptismal Vows

During the sacrament of baptism, the parent(s) make the following covenantal promises before God and the congregation:

- † To encourage the child to renounce the powers of evil and to receive the freedom of new life in Christ;
- † To teach the child so that s/he may be led to profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- † By the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple(s), to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able;
- † According to the grace given you, to grow with the child in the Christian faith, to help the child to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ by celebrating Christ's presence, by furthering Christ's mission in all the world, and by offering the nurture of the Christian church so that s/he may affirm his/her baptism.

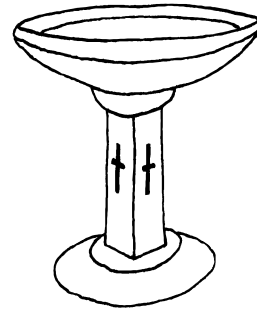


The child's church sponsor(s) [see p. 6] and godparent(s), if applicable, covenant before God and the congregation to uphold the parents in the fulfillment of their covenantal promises. In addition, the congregation covenants before God, the parents, the sponsor(s) and the godparent(s) (if applicable) to give their love, support, and care to the child being baptized as s/he lives and grows in Christ.

Our Understanding of Baptism

The sacrament of baptism is the mark of three fundamental actions:

- † the individual's initiation and acceptance into the care of the Christian Church;
- † the individual's participation in God's forgiveness of sins; and
- † the beginning of the individual's new growth into full Christian faith and life.



Baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship, and through it, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other, and with the Church of every time and place. The water, words, and actions of the sacrament are visible signs that convey rebirth and incorporation into the body of Christ (i.e., the Church universal). The Apostle Paul depicts this idea of rebirth using the dramatic imagery of dying and rising as a new creation in Jesus Christ [Romans 6:3-4]. The invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon the candidates for baptism is an affirmation that the chief actor in baptism — the promiser and doer — is God.

Baptism is not only a personal celebration in the lives of the individual candidates and their families, but also a central celebration in the life of the local church, which embodies the universal Church in a particular place. For this reason, baptism takes place in the presence of the community of faith gathered for public worship.

In officiating at a baptism, the pastor acts as a

representative of the Church universal. Baptism occurs only once in a person's life, based on the belief that God's action of grace is for all time.

In the United Church of Christ, people are baptized either as children or adults. It is our belief that children are born without sin. For that reason, there should be no sense of urgency in "getting the baby done." Indeed, we suggest that parents wait until they are in the position to nurture their own spiritual journey, regularly attend worship, and engage in the life of the church before having their child baptized.

Before a date for the baptism can be set, parents who are not *regularly attending Active Members** are to attend a series of *Covenant Classes*. The classes will cover in depth the covenantal vows the parent(s) will be making and the expectations for their personal growth in the Christian faith and their involvement in the local church. Once the *Covenant Classes* have been completed, and the parents feel ready to carry out their covenantal vows, a date for the baptism can be arranged with the Pastor.



For in the one spirit
we were all baptized
into one body.

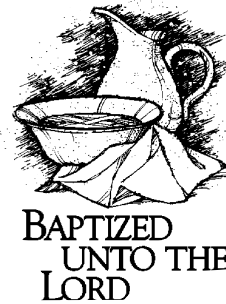
1 Corinthians 12:13

Parents may decide to choose "godparents" for infants and young children who are to be baptized. Godparents are present for the baptism and make promises identical to those of the parents concerning their role in accompanying and nurturing the newly-baptized Christian on his or her journey of faith. Thus, each godparent is expected to be

- * An Active Member is one who has been officially received as a member of the First Congregational Church and regularly attends worship and/or contributes to the church.

actively nurturing his or her growth in the Christian faith.

In addition to the godparents, one or more members of the First Congregational Church of Stoughton will serve as the child's sponsor(s). Sponsors will stand with the parents during the baptism, take the same vows as the godparents, and will provide support and encouragement to the parents as they nurture their own growth in the Christian faith. In addition, sponsors will help the congregation carry out its promise to "give their love, support, and care to the child being baptized as s/he lives and grows in Christ."

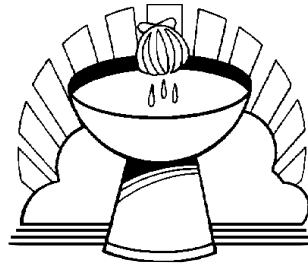


When an infant or young child is baptized, the parents, godparents, sponsors, and congregation promise to assume certain responsibilities for the Christian nurture of the baptized child. Most Protestant denominations give those who have been baptized at an early age an opportunity to make a personal profession of faith through confirmation. Confirmation usually takes place during the teenage years.

Church Guidelines for Baptisms

- † If you are not already doing so, please begin to regularly attend our Sunday morning worship service, which begins at 10:00 am.
- † Parents who are not *regularly attending* Active Members of the First Congregational Church of Stoughton, United Church of Christ (as defined the church by-laws) are to attend a series of Covenant Classes before the baptism can be scheduled. Please contact the church office for the dates of these classes.

- † Before a date can be scheduled (and after you have completed the *Covenant Classes*, if applicable), a baptismal consultation with Rev. Lenk is required. Please call her directly to set up a mutually convenient time.
- † It is expected that the parents of the child to be baptized will be active participants in a church (if not ours, then another) and attend worship on a regular basis, not only as a sign of your commitment to follow through on your covenantal promise to raise your child in the church and to nurture your own journey of faith, but also to enable the congregation to fulfill its covenant to support the parents in nurturing the faith journey of the baptized child.



- † On the Sunday of the baptism, please arrive at the church 15 minutes before the start of the worship service.
- † ***Please refrain from flash photographs during the worship service.*** The pastor is happy to pose with the family after the service if so desired.
- † Videography, provided that it be unobtrusive, is allowed. The videographer is asked to sit in the front pew and remain there, and no artificial lighting is to be used during the service.

There is no fee for baptisms. However, you may desire to make a special gift to the church's ministry in celebration of the day.

Contact Information

The Rev. Jean Niven Lenk, Pastor
Pastor's Study: 781-344-2395
Email: revjeanlenk@uccstoughton.org

First Congregational Church of Stoughton
United Church of Christ
76 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02035
Church Office: 781-344-2371
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"Go therefore and make disciples
of all nations, baptizing them in
the name of the Father and of the
Son and of the Holy Spirit. . . and
remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20